

## A Visit To The World's Largest Wholesale Market For Fresh Produce

Rungis is the world's biggest wholesale market for fresh produce. Fish, meat, fruits, vegetables, cheese and also fresh flowers are sold here each day in numbers so large that a whole train station and highway exit has been erected to aid it.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY | CHEF BARKHISH DEAN

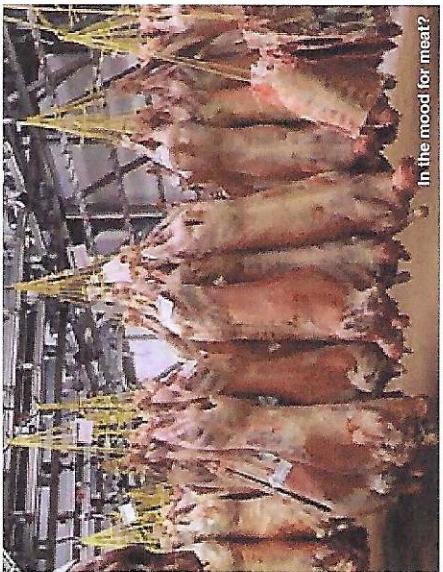


**B**eing just outside Paris, Rungis serves many Parisian restaurants and of great standing. The market has distinctive clients and only the freshest, supreme quality products are sold here. This makes it a very striking place to visit for a travelling Chef such as myself. But visiting Rungis is not so easy, no passenger trains or buses, no subways and most taxis won't just drive you there and even if you do, you need a car to enter. And Rungis

works between midnight and 7 AM. So how did I accomplish to visit?

### AWED

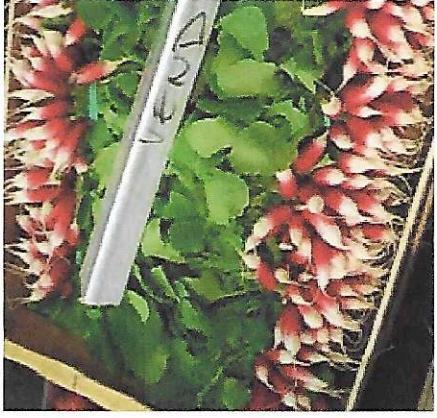
France which also offered personalized tours by Market professionals starting from 5 am, followed by a Rungis-style breakfast. So the next morning we headed out to Rungis with our guide very very early! In fact so early that people were still heading home from their nights out and we were just starting our day! The drive took only fifteen minutes or



so and the driver brought us to La Marte, where all Rungis tours begin. Covering close to 600 acres (2.43 km<sup>2</sup>) and located about 7 miles (just over 11km) south of Paris, Rungis is a city in itself and is truly bigger than the territory of Monaco. According to the Market's Facts and Figures page, close to 12 000 people work at Rungis and their annual turnover is around €8 billion. The mere scale of the market fascinated me. Luckily we were advised by our guide to dress warmly - some of the pavilions are downright freezing and trust me there is nothing worse than being tired and cold!

### THE MARKET

After donning the plastic butcher coats and the ever so stylish caps the tour began; even though it was just 5 AM when we arrived the Fish Pavilion was shutting down; they began their day as early as 2 AM Jon sees one's toes all over the place but particularly in the Fish Pavilion which is a great recap that you are in fact, visiting a real, working market. The workers there are just getting on with their day, actually end of their day and one must ensure to get out of their way as they go about their business. This collective with the intense fluorescent lights is most certainly a wake-up call if you still need one! From the Fish we moved onto the Tripe Pavilion, where I was weirdly fascinated by the numerous infants and animal body parts on display. Indeed some chickens have their heads on and some of them still had their feathers but again, brings you right back to what food looks like before you see it at the supermarket though not quite 'at the source' as it's nicely packed and dressed up but surely makes you aware of where that nice drumstick might have come from. From Poultry to Meat, tiny animals to huge ones, the Meat



not a tourist target - it's a functioning market and I think I'd favour that sanitisation feature to win over the atmosphere every time what say? Finally stopped for breakfast which was refreshing and as fresh as it can be, it was about 9 AM but it felt like lunchtime. At the same time as we breakfasted, workers around us relished wine, beers, full meals. I mean, it was lunch time for them. In any case, a mildly mesmerizing experience and one I am glad made the determination to organise.

Rungis is unquestionably the Mother of all Markets. I can't recommend Carole and La Route des Gourmets highly enough.

Chef Barkhish Dean is the CEO Johnny Rockets, India & Director Prime Gourmet Pvt. Ltd.



### FAST FACTS

You pretty much have to visit Rungis with an official guide - unless you are a registered buyer or - known as a registered buyer/ seller which I am guessing many who simply want to visit won't be!

For Booking/tours  
Gourmet tour with La Route des Gourmets  
in the district of the Madeleine square  
[www.laroutedesgourmets.fr](http://www.laroutedesgourmets.fr)  
Contact Carole Metayer